

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4872

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MX

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO ADDRESSES THE QUESTION
OF "WHO'S IN CHARGE"

1. INTRODUCTION. SINCE LAST MONTH'S RESIGNATIONS OF DIAZ ORDAZ AND GOMEZ VILLANUEVA, WHO WAS SENT AS AMBASSADOR TO ITALY REPLACING FAUSTO ZAPATA (MEXICO 13386), SOME POLITICAL COMMENTATORS HAVE BEEN DEBATING WHETHER MEXICO WAS BEING SUBJECTED TO A CURRENT "MAXIMATO", THAT IS, WHETHER EX-PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA WAS SEEKING TO CONTROL LOPEZ PORTILLO AS CALLES DID HIS SUCCESSORS IN THE LATE 1920'S AND EARLY 1930'S. PREDICTABLY THEIR CONCLUSIONS WERE THAT THE ERA OF "MAXIMATOS" WAS PAST AND UNLIKELY TO RETURN. ANOTHER PHASE OF THE DISCUSSION CENTERED AROUND WHETHER THERE WAS "POLITICAL CANNIBALISM" IN MEXICO.

2. BY INDIRECTION BUT NONETHELESS STRONGLY, LOPEZ PORTILLO TREATED THE THEME IN THE FINAL SECTION OF HIS SEPTEMBER 1 "INFORME" WHERE, AS EMBASSY HAS REPORTED (MEXICO 14731), HE REACHED HEIGHTS OF POLITICAL ELOQUENCE THAT CHARACTERIZED HIS DECEMBER 1 INAUGURAL. NEVER MENTIONING ECHEVERRIA BY NAME, LOPEZ PORTILLO DESCRIBED THE "PEOPLE'S CRITICAL LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR INSTITUTIONS, IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AUTHORITIES, IN THE NATION, AND EVEN IN OURSELVES" THAT PREVAILED ON NOVEMBER 19, 1976 (THE DATE OF THE WORST RUN ON MEXICAN BANKS), ADDING "MEXICO WAS AT THE MOST DIFFICULT AND DARKEST POINT OF ITS CRISIS, THE TIME OF GREATEST SKEPTICISM. THAT WAS THE STATE OF THE NATION WHEN IT WAS DELIVERED INTO OUR HANDS JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO." HE LISTED A NUMBER OF ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION,

BUT POINTED OUT THAT "THE CRISIS HAS NOT BEEN OVERCOME. WE STILL HAVE A CONSIDERABLE WAY TO GO BEFORE WE CAN OVERCOME IT COMPLETELY, AND ANOTHER AND EVEN LONGER WAY TO GO BEFORE WE CAN RECUPERATE FROM THE CRISIS."

3. HE CONTINUED: "TODAY, HOWEVER, WE CAN FEEL ENCOURAGED TO FACE THE FUTURE WITH CALM OPTIMISM.... THE TIME OF ABUSES AND RACH ATTACKS HAS PASSED..WE ARE NO LONGER DEMORALIZED BY RUMORS, WHICH NOW SERVE ONLY AS A PASTIME FOR PONTIFICATING SIDEWALK OR CAFE POLITICAL IDEOLOGUES SPECIALISTS IN MACHIAVELLIAN MESSAGES OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE, AND MINIMAXIMATOS." (COMMENT: SPANISH TEXT READS, "ESPECIALISTAS EN MAQUIAVELICAS EMBAJADAS Y MINIMAXIMATOS." OFFICIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY PRESIDENCY READS "SPECIALISTS IN THE MACHIAVELLIAN INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS.")

4. LATER IN SPEECH, JLP INDICATED HIS PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY: "THINGS OF YESTERDAY ARE SLOW TO DIE, THINGS OF TODAY FOR TOMORROW ARE STILL BEING BORN. WE ASSURE YOU THAT SOME WILL EVENTUALLY DIE AND OTHERS WILL EVENTUALLY EMERGE. WE DO NOT REJECT THE PAST BUT RATHER ASSIMILATE EXPERIENCE, CORRECTING OUR MISTAKES AND IMPROVING UPON OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS A GUIDELINE FOR THE FUTURE." HE CONTINUED: "SOME 40 YEARS AGO MEXICO CEASED TO BE A NATION OF CAUDILLOS AND BECAME A NATION OF INSTITUTIONS. ONE OF THESE INSTITUTIONS IS THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC. IT IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE PEOPLE, AND ONLY THE PEOPLE, WHO GRANT THIS SUPREME MANDATE. THEY HAVE BESTOWED THIS HIGH HONOR ON ME AND HAVE ENTRUSTED ME WITH THE EVEN HIGHER RESPONSIBILITY THAT I HOLD TODAY. I WOULD BE DEFRAUDING THE PEOPLE IF I DID NOT EXERCISE THAT MANDATE WITH ALL THAT I AM AND CAN BE, WITHOUT BOASTFULNESS OR ARROGANCE.... AS PRESIDENT I AM ATTENTIVE TO THE FEELINGS OF THE NATION AND LISTEN TO THE OPINIONS OF MY COLLABORATORS AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE MY GOVERNMENT. WHAT IS MORE, I OFTEN ELICIT THEIR OPINIONS: BUT AS CHIEF OF THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE I CANNOT ALLOW MYSELF TO BE PRESSURED. IN MATTERS WITHIN MY JURISDICTION I ALONE HAVE DECIDED, DO DECIDE, AND SHALL CONTINUE TO DECIDE. IF I HAVE BEEN RIGHT, I AM FULFILLING MY COMMITMENT; IF THERE HAVE BEEN ERRORS, THEY ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY."

5. SECRETARY OF INTERIOR REYES HEROLES EMPHASIZED ON SEPTEMBER 2 THAT, IN TALKING ABOUT RUMOR-MONGERING, JLP HAD SPOKEN IN HEAVILY IRONIC TERMS ABOUT THOSE WHO WERE CREATING "CHINESE MONSTERS", BUT THEY DID NOT IN ANY WAY THREATEN MEXICAN STABILITY; MEXICO IS A COUNTRY OF INSTITUTIONS, NOT OF GOSSIP, AND THE GOSSIP PEDDLERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE AMUSING THEMSELVES. ALSO ON SEPTEMBER

BER 2, JLP ATTENDED TRADITIONAL LUNCHEON (WITH HIS CABINET) AND HEARD DEFENSE SECRETARY GALVAN PRAISE THE SOLIDITY OF THE COUNTRY'S INSTITUTIONS AND STATE THAT "THE LOYALTY OF THE ARMY TO THESE INSTITUTIONS IS UNCHANGEABLE, AND FROM TOP TO BOTTOM THE ARMED FORCES HAVE NO DOUBT WHERE THEIR LOYALTY LIES."

6. ON SEPTEMBER 1 FORMER PRESIDENT GUSTAVO DIAZ ORDAZ, UNDERGOING TREATMENT FOR EYE PROBLEMS IN LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA, SENT JLP WARM TELEGRAM OF CONGRATULATION ON HIS "INFORME" AND EXPRESSED RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT AND GREAT AFFECTION FOR A FRIEND. IF ECHEVERRIA SENT ANY KIND OF MESSAGE FROM PARIS, IT WAS NOT NOTED BY PRESS.

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7. COMMENT: WITHIN LIMITS OF RULES OF POLITICAL PLAY, JLP'S CRITICISM OF THE ECHEVERRIA LEGACY AND ITS DONOR WAS STRONG, AS WERE HIS STATEMENTS THAT HE ALONE IS MAKING THE DECISIONS, AND "CANNOT ALLOW MYSELF TO BE PRESSURED." THE DENIAL THAT HE CAN BE PRESSURED HAS TO BE INTERPRETED, SINCE THE MEXICAN SYSTEM INCLUDES THE BUILT-IN PRESSURE NOT GRATUITOUSLY TO CAUSE PROBLEMS WITH ANY INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE. WE BELIEVE THE REASON FOR JLP'S STATEMENT WAS TO INDICATE THAT HE KNEW CLEARLY WHAT THE RUMOR MILLS WERE SAYING AND TO ESTABLISH, IN THE SOLEMNITY OF THE INFORME AND WITH THE WHOLE COUNTRY AS AUDIENCE, THAT HE IS RUNNING THINGS AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. END COMMENT. THOMPSON

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